

Sourdough Faith - "True faith is not a mere belief but a living experience." – George Fox

I want to begin by acknowledging what powerful speakers have shared with us recently --- Taylor, Ruthie, Jon, and LeeAnn. We, Spokane Friends, are truly blessed!

Some time ago Jonas Cox (which many of you know) took a bread making class in San Francisco. When he returned from his class, he asked, “do you make bread from wild yeast or commercial yeast”. Admittedly, I had no idea what he meant. He also suggested we might not be doing it quite right. Curious, I took a sourdough bread class and discovered how easy it was and what he meant about doing it wrong. It only requires two ingredients plus patience, practice, and persistence with a gentle touch.

If you take flour and water and mix them together, something invisible happens. Wild yeast – already in the air --- starts to grow. Slowly. Quietly.

Every day, you feed it.

Sometimes you throw part of it away (or save it as discard).

And for a while... it looks like nothing is happening.

But if you stay with it --- after about a week. It rises. (hold jar up)

Flour. Water. Air.

Something alive is growing inside.

What if faith works the same way?

I’m calling it Sourdough Faith.

In our society “faith” is rarely spoken. We don’t discuss our faith with anyone. It’s not fashionable. Our society frowns on it. On television and the movies, it is used only in a religious context. However, the derogatory “f” word is used 30 – 40 times per hour. Astonishing!

The word faith is used 244 times in the New Testament. Faith is a core Christian value but are we really valuing it? Let's talk about faith and how we live it!

Hebrews 11:1

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

A batch of sourdough bread is unpredictable. You mix the starter with warm water (not hot) and flour. Then you wait. After 30 minutes you gently (unlike regular bread with dry yeast which you knead aggressively) fold and stretch it – again and again. And then... you wait..... sometimes for two days for it to work. This is sourdough faith! It takes time. You treat it with reverence and wait patiently.

In Matthew 13 Jesus gives us practical, visual references and instructions in the form of parables. As recorded by Matthew, Jesus gave us the Parable of the Sower, Parable of the Weeds, Parable of the Mustard Seed, the Parable of the Yeast, the Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl, and lastly the Parable of the Net. So why does Jesus include this one small, almost hidden parable about yeast?

Jesus understood this kind of quiet work. Let's look at the Parable of the Yeast in Matthew 13:33:

"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."

It's one verse. It is such a small parable but it's like sourdough, it grew on me. I believe that this parable is instructing us to be patient. Work through our problems, thoughts, challenges until everything is saturated. Kneading sourdough is a gentle process. You wet your hands and gently pull and stretch the dough. Then you wait and do it again. I've only worked with one pound of flour. Can you imagine the stretch and resolve this woman had to mix sixty pounds. She must have had a very large mixing bowl! She was not only dedicated but strong.

She wasn't flashy.

She wasn't fast.

She was unstoppable.

Our sourdough bread instructor gave us important instructions to not give up. Be **patient**. She warned us when things are going wrong. Bake it anyway. The dough falls. Bake it anyway. You forgot to add an ingredient. Bake it anyway. It didn't rise like it should. Bake it anyway.

I recently prepared a meal for our neighbors in Mississippi. I made some sourdough cinnamon rolls. I did everything wrong. My milk mixture was too hot (heat kills the yeast) and I added more liquid to cool the yeast. I had to add more flour. All my ratios were off. I kept working to correct my mistakes. I baked it anyway.

Didn't rise? Bake it anyway.

Didn't feel it? Pray anyway.

Didn't understand it? Trust anyway.

Sourdough = > Patience = Slow down you can't rush it.

Sourdough Faith takes **practice**. It takes a trained eye to know when the starter is ready to start a loaf, dough doubled in size, and when it's baked long enough. Practice is something repeated again and again.

George Fox wrote, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We need to practice our faith. This practice exercises our mental, physical and spiritual muscles, for an achievable outcome.

The woman in Mark 5 practiced her faith by trusting in the outcome and acting upon her belief.

Mark 5: 25-34:

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and

touched his cloak, because she thought, “if I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” (a casual gesture in our day -- but in her time, this broke serious social and religious law boundaries). Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “who touched my clothes? (The disciples reaction is priceless) You see the people crowding against you, “his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, “Who touched me?” (more than just a little deflection) ... But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. (Jesus didn’t give up) Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

She was desperate. She didn’t just believe – she acted. That’s sourdough faith – reaching out even when you’re not sure you’re allowed... trusting that something will happen... even when everything says it shouldn’t.

Sourdough faith reflects how God works in our lives:

- Small beginnings.
- Slow growth
- Steady care
- Hidden transformation
- Eventually, undeniable growth.

Persistence is really the “why”. Why is it important to feed my faith and keep going?

Romans 8:35-39

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Our sourdough faith persists due to Christ’s all-encompassing compassion and love in us.

We can rest and relax in the knowledge of Christ’s love and cultivate our sourdough faith. It isn’t a wish list of things, a magic pill we can swallow. Sourdough faith is the belief that through Christ we are never separated from God’s love. He is always with us at that moment, in our hardship, in our lostness, he is there.

Because some things --- like faith – are meant to grow slowly. Why keep feeding your faith? Because it’s not just about your effort – it’s about God’s faithfulness. As George Fox stated, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition."

Sourdough faith isn’t dramatic or flashy.

It doesn’t happen overnight.

It grows quietly, faithfully, tirelessly.

If you stay with it...

If you keep feeding it...

If you don’t give up....

Something alive will rise

So...bake it anyway!